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Swedish Council for Higher Education

The Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) is a public agency that facilitates skills attainment for Sweden's current and future needs.

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Higher education terminology

There are a large number of special words and phrases that are used in the academic world. Here are some of the more important ones, and help with what they actually mean.

It's easy to be confused and mix up the different terms and phrases used in the academic world. Especially difficult are subjects, main fields of study, and categories where it can be hard to understand how they're structured as it often differs from university to university. Traditional school subjects like social studies, history and economics are often structured in a different way at the higher education level.

Subject categories and university organisation

Sometimes, subject categories in areas such as natural science, humanities, education and social science are called the same thing in different university departments - but not always.

Courses like geography, sociology, cultural geography, gender studies and nutrition studies often belong to the same university department or faculty: social sciences.

Different courses and programmes connected to the subject economics, even though often considered a social sciences subject, are found in the same economics faculty or department. Here, you can often find courses in national economics, for example industrial, financial and environmental economics.

Subject, course and programme and their content

The way universities name their programmes and courses can and may vary quite a bit. A subject or programme can therefore have very different names at different universities and contain completely different required courses. Even the opposite can be true: two subjects or programmes can have very different names but have the same content. It's important to carefully review and compare different courses and programmes with each other before making a decision.

Use 'Hitta och jämför utbildning' to compare courses

If you feel confident enough with your Swedish - or have a guidance counsellor or friend who can help you - you can use the 'Hitta och jämför utbildning' function on Studera.nu in Swedish to compare the contents of different courses and programmes at different universities.

[Hitta och jämför utbildning \(in Swedish\)](#)

Degree/qualification description (Examensbeskrivning)

Every programme has a degree (qualification) description posted on the university's website. In this description, you can find information about:

- the number of credits
- goals for the programme (what you're expected to learn, understand, and be able to do when you're finished with the programme)

Programme syllabus (Utbildningsplan)

On the university website, you can also find a programme syllabus with information regarding:

- which courses are included
- the programme's set up - how it's organised
- the specific entry requirements needed for the course in addition to the general entry requirements

Course syllabus (Kursplan)

Each individual course - both those that are part of a programme and those that are freestanding - must also have a syllabus. This includes:

- what level the course is (bachelor's, master's or doctoral)
- how many points the course is
- the course content
- goals of the course (what you're expected to learn, understand, and be able to do when you're finished with the course)
- the specific entry requirements needed to be eligible for the course
- what course literature is required.

Getting a degree/qualification

The subjects you study are more specific and deeper in content than upper secondary courses. Programmes are made up of courses. One semester of full-time studies gives 30 credits. A full academic year gives 60 credits. Courses are combined to three different types of degrees at the bachelor's level:

- General qualification (Degree of Bachelor and Higher Education Diploma)
- Professional qualification (for example nurse, teacher, doctor, engineer)
- Arts qualification (Higher Education Diploma or Degree of Bachelor in Fine Arts)

[Read more about the different degrees and qualifications](#)

Most common for students is to receive a degree or qualification as part of a programme. The courses that make up a programme are studied in a specific order.

If you take freestanding courses, you choose yourself in what order you'd like to study them. In this way, you can put together courses that lead to a general qualification or degree. For example, you may study 90 credits of economic history and combine it with 90 credits in another subject. You can then apply for a qualification/degree with economic history as the main field of study (sometimes called major).

When you study freestanding courses, you do not have a guaranteed place available in them. You do however have a guaranteed place in the necessary courses if you are studying a programme and when you decide to study a subject at a deeper level.

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